

City of Post Falls Mayor

| | Scot Haug | Ronald G. Jacobson | Randy Westlund |
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| 1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position? | <p>My name is Scot Haug, and I am running for Mayor of Post Falls. I've been blessed to live in Idaho most of my life, and Post Falls has been the center of my career and community involvement for over 30 years. I served 32 years with the Post Falls Police Department, including 10 years as Chief of Police, and I also built and ran a successful local business. Those experiences gave me a front row seat to both the strengths and struggles of our growing city. I am running because Post Falls is at a crossroads. We need leadership that prioritizes fiscal responsibility, public safety, and sane growth. I want families, longtime residents, and new neighbors alike to enjoy a safe, affordable, and welcoming community. I also want to bring my Christian conservative values to City Hall. Leaders must serve with integrity, humility, and a commitment to the people they represent. I will work to protect freedoms, strengthen families, and ensure City Hall reflects our community's character and values.</p> | <p>My name is Ron Jacobson and I am running for re-election as Mayor of the City of Post Falls. I have held this position for 12 years and previously served on the City Council for 15 years and the Park and Recreation Commission for 7 years. I am running because I care about our city. I was born and raised in Coeur d'Alene and my wife and I moved to Post Falls in 1980. This is my home. I have an accounting degree and earned my CPA license. I retired after a 44 year career in banking. We have kept taxes under control with only one tax increase in 14 years. We have planned for the future and the city is in a good financial position. Post Falls is a safe community and I will continue to support our police and other first responders.</p> <p>I am the most experienced candidate, have proven leadership skills, have the support of our staff and have been involved in many church and service organizations. I have spent 34 years in service to Post Falls and want to continue doing so.</p> | <p>I'm Randy Westlund, running for Mayor of Post Falls. As a Christian, husband, and father, I believe I have an obligation to bring good Christian stewardship to my city. I want my children and grandchildren to be able to live here, and we need to make sure Post Falls remains a good place to raise a family. With our fifth child due in December, my wife and I think a lot about the future and where our city is headed. We need to prioritize family formation, public safety, ownable housing, and quality of life. Change is inevitable, but whether it takes us in a good or bad direction is up to us.</p> <p>From my time on city council, I know exactly what the problems are. And from my experience in industry and as a small business owner, I know exactly how to fix them.</p> |

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| <p>2. How could our city be improved? Please provide your top 2-3 ideas.</p> | <p>Fiscal Responsibility & Tax Relief – In five years, the City budget has more than doubled—from \$68M to nearly \$160M, while the population grew only 22%. Families are stretched by constant tax hikes, and this spending is unsustainable. As Mayor, I'll cut waste, restore accountability, and protect taxpayers.</p> <p>Public Safety & Strong Families – Safe neighborhoods are the foundation of a healthy community. As former Police Chief, I know what it takes to keep Post Falls safe. I'll ensure our officers and first responders are supported, while bringing Christian conservative values that strengthen families.</p> <p>Customer Service & Sane Growth – City Hall should work for the people, not against them. Too many residents and small businesses struggle to get answers. We need a culture shift to a "customer-first" mindset. Growth must be managed responsibly, with infrastructure, schools, and quality of life prioritized before more development.</p> | <p>Increase our commercial tax base to help lessen the tax burden on residential property owners. I don't mean this to appear that we are going to tax commercial properties at a higher rate, but rather broaden the tax base.</p> <p>Find operating efficiencies within the city to reduce cost of operation, lessening the need to rely on tax increases.</p> <p>Find ways to address the cost of housing. This may entail deferral of fees, flexibility in density and working with other agencies to address affordable housing.</p> | <p>Here are three reforms from my 90-day plan: First, I'll appoint individual council members to liaison with city departments. This easy win will bring a new level of elected oversight to our local government. It will also bring about better collaboration between elected officials and city staff to keep everyone on the same page and pulling in the same direction.</p> <p>Second, I'll create an employee incentive program to reward employees who find budget savings or more efficient ways to do things. If we build a culture of continual improvement and reward out-of-the-box thinking, we can find both little and big things to improve on. Without free market pressure to be efficient, incentive programs like this are necessary to keep things running efficiently.</p> <p>Third, I'll make sure the long-term budgetary impact is always discussed for every decision we make, especially with growth and land use. We shouldn't be making decisions and then only finding out later how much it costs long-term.</p> |

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| <p>3. In your opinion, is growth in North Idaho being handled appropriately?</p> | <p>No, growth in Post Falls is not being handled appropriately. Too much of it is unchecked. Longtime residents who have lived in single-family neighborhoods for decades are suddenly waking up to apartment complexes being shoehorned into their neighborhoods. That isn't fair to the families who invested their lives in this community and expected stability and a certain quality of life.</p> <p>Adding to the problem, the City has been using Urban Renewal Districts (URDs) to incentivize residential development. This practice diverts millions of dollars away from the general fund—the very dollars that should pay for police, fire, streets, and other essential services. Instead, taxpayers are left carrying the load while services struggle to keep up. This must stop.</p> <p>As Mayor, I will fight for sane growth—development that matches the pace of infrastructure and public safety, respects existing neighborhoods, and puts the needs of citizens ahead of developer profits.</p> | <p>I believe it is. In Post Falls, we always consider the impact growth has on our infrastructure and solicit comments from 24 different agencies regarding new projects. The city reviews requests to see if they align with our Comprehensive Plan, our Future Land Use Map and all of our other master plans. Projects are not rubber stamped by the city but are thoroughly reviewed and analyzed. Personally, I support growth but prefer to see it occur at a slower sustainable level.</p> | <p>No. We need two significant changes:</p> <p>First, a strong preference for ownable housing encoded in our comprehensive plan and guiding our zoning decisions. Homeownership is a key part of the American Dream, and we can't have an entire generation cut off from homeownership. We need ownable single-family starter homes, like we used to build in America.</p> <p>Second, we need better planning for the financial impact of long-term infrastructure maintenance. We've had a lot of new infrastructure installed and while we have plans for what needs significant maintenance over the next 20 years, we don't have a clear plan for how to actually pay for it. Long-term fiscal responsibility can't be ignored.</p> |

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| <p>4. As cities face increasing costs to pay for city services including law enforcement, fire districts, schools and increased traffic due to increased home developments, what are your suggestions so that growth pays for itself?</p> | <p>If it were not for Urban Renewal, Post Falls would already have millions more in tax dollars to fund police, streets, and schools. Instead, those dollars are diverted to subsidize residential development, leaving taxpayers to carry the load. Fire is its own entity, but still a vital partner, and these diversions strain their ability to keep up as well. This must stop.</p> <p>Like any business or household, we must right-size our budget. Right now, Post Falls operates as a tax-and-spend city, and families are paying the price. Growth should never come at the expense of existing residents. My priority is to ensure new development pays its fair share, through impact fees, infrastructure requirements, and responsible planning, so that growth funds itself.</p> <p>As Mayor, I will reduce the city budget by \$1 million in my first term without cutting services to residents, restore fiscal discipline, and end misuse of Urban Renewal for housing. I have a plan to make this happen.</p> | <p>Post Falls uses impact fees to help pay for services impacted by growth. We cannot legally charge an impact fee for schools. I believe we need to work with state legislators to review and hopefully eliminate Houst Bill 389 which limits tax revenue from new growth, new annexations and closed Urban Renewal Districts. Impact fees are reviewed on an annual basis to determine if the amount charged is sufficient to meet the needs.</p> <p>My suggestion is that we continue to review impact fees and work for legislation that will address the loss of revenue created by HB 389.</p> | <p>We likely need state-level reform to make growth truly pay for itself. HB 389 from 2021 limited the taxable value added from new construction and annexation to 90% of the assessed value. This missing 10% has to be filled in by a general budget increase. I'd like to see this law reworked with a closer eye to second-order effects.</p> <p>We can also seriously consider privately-maintained roads in some new subdivisions. Raising taxes on everyone else in the city to pay for a road that's only for one specific neighborhood isn't a great system.</p> <p>The city is also taking a long-overdue look at how we calculate impact fees that are paid at the time of new development. These are supposed to help growth pay for itself, but it isn't always done correctly. For example, the impact fees for a single-family home are the same regardless of the size or location of the home. I expect we'll have an update for that within the next year.</p> |

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| 5. What improvements should be made to the mayor's role in the planning and authorization of new developments? | <p>The key is ensuring that appointments to the Planning and Zoning Commission are based on qualifications, not special interests. Too often, residents feel decisions are tilted toward developers instead of the community. As Mayor, I will appoint people with integrity, knowledge, and a commitment to citizens, not political or financial agendas.</p> <p>The Mayor also has significant influence on city staff and how they interact with the public. Right now, Post Falls, to many, feels more like a bureaucracy than a democracy, with staff driving decisions instead of serving residents. That must change. I will set a clear expectation of transparency, accountability, and service. Growth should be carefully planned, matching infrastructure, schools, and public safety, while respecting existing neighborhoods. My focus will be responsible planning that puts citizens first and restores trust in City Hall.</p> | <p>The mayor only votes in case of a tie. New developments are reviewed with staff and authorized by the city council. I believe this system is effective and no changes need to be made. I will share my views but will never try to influence the council.</p> | <p>The mayor's role, as defined by state law, is in overseeing staff to implement the policies set by the city council. It's executive in nature whereas the city council is legislative. Because of this separation of powers, the responsibility for oversight largely rests with the mayor and it's critical that he carry out this role.</p> <p>One big thing the mayor can do is represent the city when talking to developers and prospective businesses and communicate a compelling positive vision of what the city wants and why. Developers generally try to please the city because they rely on city approval, but it breaks down when expectations are unclear. This breakdown in communication is something the mayor can fix.</p> |
| 6. In your opinion, should any services currently provided by the city be cut, eliminated, or privatized? | <p>This deserves serious consideration. I believe private enterprise is often more efficient than government. We need to keep government small and focused on its core responsibilities: public safety, infrastructure, and essential services, not trying to do everything. If there are areas where privatization can deliver the same or better quality of service at a reduced cost, then we should pursue it. Taxpayers deserve the most value for every dollar they send to City Hall.</p> <p>My approach as Mayor will be practical, not ideological: review services honestly, ask if they are being delivered effectively, and determine if the private sector can do it better and cheaper. If the answer is yes, then shifting to private enterprise should be on the table. Post Falls families already balance their own budgets this way, and City Hall should be held to the same standard.</p> | <p>I don't believe services should be cut. Our residents expect the level of service that we provide. Some ask that services be increased. Not all services are used by all residents, such as our parks, but those that do use said services expect them to continue.</p> <p>We have on occasion considered privatizing some services, but the city is best equipped to be the provider. Snow removal is one that comes to mind. If this service were privatized, residents would most likely see a decrease in level of service. The city is equipped to handle this task and makes it a priority.</p> <p>There might be a situation where privatization makes sense, and we need to be open minded about it.</p> | <p>I'm not in favor of service cuts. I believe we need to thread the needle and maintain our current service levels without turning into a high-tax city. Being a conservative city in a conservative state, we don't have the same problems with fraud and waste that big liberal cities have.</p> <p>Having said that, there is always room for improvement. In particular, we spend a lot of money on consultants for things we can likely bring in-house to save money now that we're nearing 50k population and have more full-time staff.</p> |

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| <p>7. Do you believe access to city managed water and sewer should be increased to rural communities, why or why not?</p> | <p>No, I do not believe the city should expand water and sewer service to rural communities outside city limits. Post Falls taxpayers already carry the cost of maintaining critical infrastructure, and it would be unfair to burden them further by extending those services to areas the city does not govern. Rural living is different from city living, and those who choose it should not expect the same services without being part of the city and paying their share.</p> <p>If a rural area is annexed into Post Falls, then it should be treated the same as every other taxpayer within city limits, no more and no less. But expanding city infrastructure to unincorporated areas creates long-term costs that strain our budget and stretch services too thin. As Mayor, I will focus on strengthening and maintaining the infrastructure we already have, ensuring it can meet the needs of current residents before taking on added burdens.</p> | <p>I do not. City services are provided to city residents only. The city's building codes may differ from other cities' or county code/requirements. If a property is in the city, we can make sure it conforms to our code requirements. City residents pay city taxes that help fund all city operational costs. It makes no sense to me to provide services to those who do not live in the city or pay city taxes.</p> | <p>If this means extending city infrastructure beyond the limits of city jurisdiction, that wouldn't be a good idea. We use water districts for this sort of thing in Idaho, which is a good solution. Residents can get together and create these independent districts to share wells without being tied to a city.</p> <p>I also believe in limiting suburban sprawl and preserving county land so we don't turn into somewhere with California levels of traffic. Cities don't need to be massive.</p> |

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| 8. How do you plan on keeping a healthy reserve fund without increasing taxes? | <p>I am a firm believer that any government agency should maintain a solid reserve fund. A healthy balance protects essential services and ensures stability in times of uncertainty. But Post Falls currently has one of the largest reserve funds in the state, over \$105 million according to Transparent Idaho, and that is simply too much. Holding excessive taxpayer dollars in government accounts while families struggle with rising costs is not responsible stewardship.</p> <p>We need a clear policy that defines how much reserve is truly necessary to cover city operations and emergencies. Once that level is met, the excess should be returned to the taxpayers, not stockpiled by the city. As Mayor, I will work to right-size our reserves, maintain fiscal security, and ensure residents benefit directly from their own tax dollars instead of watching government hoard more than it needs.</p> | <p>We need to continue finding operational efficiencies, budget wisely and look for other revenue sources. To a large degree, we are at the mercy of state legislation when it comes to funding. Taxing entities in Idaho are limited to a 3% annual tax increase, excluding foregone taxes. House Bill 389 limited revenue available from new growth, annexations and closed Urban Renewal Districts. This negatively impacted revenue streams and we have to find ways to offset challenges this creates. We must be open to suggestions, willing to change and creative to ensure the city remains on strong financial footings.</p> <p>It needs to be understood that the mayor does not control spending, budgeting etc. The city council makes those decisions with the mayor only voting in case of a tie. I have only voted twice in my terms as mayor. Some candidates promise tax cuts, spending cuts, etc. but it is up to the council to decide. Promises like these are made because that's what the public wants to hear.</p> | <p>First, through efficiency gains. My day job is streamlining businesses, so I know exactly what to do. I believe you need a mayor with experience in industry and new businesses to know how to bring those principles into government.</p> <p>Preventative maintenance is also a major factor. We're not investing enough in maintaining our streets and other infrastructure today and as a result we'll spend more money in the long run when we have to replace those things early. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and that's especially true of maintenance. It's all about prioritization.</p> |

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| <p>9. What is your opinion on affordable housing? Is it something that the city should be pursuing?</p> | <p>No. I believe the best thing the city can do for affordable housing is to keep taxes low, stop spending unnecessarily, streamline the approval process, and then get out of the way of free enterprise. Government does not build affordable housing efficiently...private enterprise does. What the city can control are the barriers it places in the way. Excessive fees, delays, and red tape only drive costs higher and make housing less attainable for working families. You can look across the Country and see how affordable housing turns out when the government gets involved.</p> <p>The role of City Hall should be to create a predictable, fair, and efficient process for builders while ensuring growth is responsible and supported by infrastructure. Beyond that, the market should be allowed to do what it does best: provide options that meet demand. As Mayor, I will focus on reducing the burden the government places on housing and make sure Post Falls is not an obstacle to families wanting a home.</p> | <p>Affordable housing is very important. Those who want to home ownership should have options available to them. I believe that the market will address this to some degree through supply and demand. This however can create dissatisfaction with residents who want to see an end to growth. There is no perfect answer. The city is limited in what can be done to address housing costs. Waiving of fees on new homes would put the city in a more challenging financial position. Growth requires staff levels sufficient to provide services. Lower fee income would not allow us to maintain appropriate staffing levels. We have created the Tiny Home and Cottage home ordinances to address affordable housing. Smaller homes on smaller lots at a lower price. We have also worked with PAHA on their Miracle on Britton project. I do believe this is something the city should be focusing on, but there are limits on what can be done.</p> | <p>"Affordable housing" typically refers to government-subsidized apartments through programs like Section 8. I'm opposed to that type of government subsidy and interference in the free market. On the other hand, we do need starter homes that young families can actually afford when working local jobs. We need starter homes, not more apartments and McMansions. The government's role here is mostly to cut red tape, legalize traditional American starter homes, and get out of the way so the free market can address the need.</p> |

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| <p>10. All too often local residents feel that their public comment is not taken into consideration when decisions are made that directly affect their daily lives and their property values. What would you do differently to change the public's perception?</p> | <p>This is an area where I shine. When I was Chief of Police, citizen surveys consistently showed a 99% approval rating under my leadership. That didn't happen by accident; it came from accessibility, transparency, and listening to people.</p> <p>Right now, all of City Administration is housed behind a locked door at City Hall. That sends the wrong message to residents. City Hall should be open, accessible, and transparent. As I've been canvassing, many residents have told me they've never had an elected official come to their door. That needs to change. As Mayor, I will remove barriers, hold regular town halls and listening sessions, and make myself personally available to answer questions.</p> <p>Public trust comes from openness and accountability. My goal is to restore that trust by ensuring Post Falls residents know their voices matter and their input truly shapes the future of our community.</p> | <p>I explain that we hear the public's comments, but if property is zoned appropriately for requests before us, there is often little we can do to deny the request. Updating the Comprehensive Plan is an important tool for our citizens to have their opinions be heard. Objections to development are often based on emotions, and I completely understand the concern. People speak against development saying infrastructure will not accommodate the new growth and approving requests will decrease the value of their property. Before requests are submitted for approval, staff reviews them for impacts they will have. If infrastructure can't accommodate the project, it will usually not make its way forward for approval. I mention this because while we do hear and appreciate public comment, council needs to consider all sides of the proposal. In addition, I have not seen property values decrease. As mayor, I only vote in case of a tie, but I always allow citizens to speak during public comment.</p> | <p>The biggest thing we need is clarity about the decision-making process. For example, any annexation and development is a multi-step process that takes months or years. A lot of public comment comes at a time when the council can't act on it because the decision made at each step is legally constrained to a particular topic or set of questions. This leads to from both the council who feel unable to act, and the residents, who feel unheard. If we had better communication about the whole process and helped guide residents in expressing their concerns in an impactful way, it would greatly improve the situation.</p> <p>We also need a more cohesive positive vision about where we're going and what we want the city to look like in 20 and 50 years. A vision like this is forged with public input and both provides needed clarity about the future, but also gives people a reason to be excited for the future (if it's a good vision). We need to know where we want to go if we ever want to get there.</p> |

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| 11. What is your opinion on “Smart Cities” and how they apply to North Idaho? | <p>I believe technology can play a useful role in city government, but we need to be very cautious about how “Smart City” concepts are applied in North Idaho. Tools that improve traffic flow or help deliver services more efficiently or provide enhanced protection can be helpful, but we must balance systems that compromise privacy, increase surveillance, or reduce local control.</p> <p>Post Falls is a community built on independence and personal freedom, and I want to keep it that way. Any technology we adopt should be practical, transparent, and always serve the people, not the other way around. As Mayor, I will focus on using technology as a tool to make life easier for residents while ensuring we preserve the values and small-town character that make North Idaho special.</p> | <p>I am not a fan of Smart Cities. I am not aware of any North Idaho cities that strive to attain this designation. Good planning is important but again, I am not a fan.</p> | <p>I’m opposed to the Big Brother surveillance state. As an engineer, I’ve worked on image recognition systems and internet-connected sensors. I know exactly how they work, what the pitfalls are, and why most of them are inherently insecure. I don’t have extra “smart” devices in my house.</p> <p>At the same time, there are efficiency gains from technology (like AI) that we can’t ignore. America as a nation has always been the leader in revolutionizing industries with new technology, and we can leverage this in government too. The key is to make sure we’re not doing anything that’s tracking or spying on citizens, but rather using technology to automate boring daily tasks so our staff can be more efficient and we can keep taxes low.</p> |
| 12. Should the concept of “equitable outcome” be implemented as a part of the city council’s decision-making process? Why or why not? | <p>No, I do not believe “equitable outcome” should be part of the city’s decision-making process. The government’s role is to treat all citizens fairly and equally under the law, not to guarantee equal results. Trying to engineer outcomes almost always creates more division and unintended consequences, while shifting focus away from the core duties of local government, public safety, infrastructure, and basic services.</p> <p>What the council should ensure is that the process is fair, transparent, and accessible to everyone. Residents should know their voices matter, their concerns are heard, and decisions are made on facts and community standards, not on political agendas. As Mayor, I will focus on equal opportunity, fiscal responsibility, and common-sense governance that serves every citizen of Post Falls equally.</p> | <p>I had not heard this term before. In looking up the definition of equitable outcome, I find “results that are fair and just...”. I believe in fair and just results, but this appears to go beyond the short definition. I have found that when the city council makes a decision, some may find it fair and just, while others feel their opinions or voices have not been heard. It is very difficult to take actions that make all people happy all the time.</p> <p>I do believe the council tries to be fair, but again, different people have different views or beliefs.</p> | <p>The government should not be in the business of regulating outcomes, only preserving rights and opportunities. Trying to ensure equal outcomes is exactly where liberals go wrong. People have different abilities, and that’s okay. America is the land of opportunity, but whether you’re successful or not depends on how much work you put in, what your skills are, and to some extent how lucky you are.</p> |

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| 13. Is there anything in your personal, business, or career life that would be a conflict of interest in your ability to serve the people of this city? | No. I am ready to serve. | No. Even when I was working in commercial banking, nothing came close to being a conflict of interest. There were a handful of times when I recused myself, not because of an actual conflict, but because participating could have been perceived as a conflict. I have never engaged in any activity or taken any action that would be a conflict with me serving the city. Twice last weekend I was told my integrity is one of my defining characteristics. This is an honor and something I will not compromise. | No. |
| 14. What is your background and why do you feel it qualifies you for this position? | <p>My background is in public safety, business, and community leadership, experience that directly prepares me to be an effective mayor. I served 32 years with the Post Falls Police Department, including 10 years as Chief, where I managed people, operations, and major budgets. For two decades, I oversaw the largest portion of the city budget, so I understand in detail how government works and specifically how the Post Falls budget operates. Under my leadership, citizen surveys showed a 99% approval rating because I focused on accessibility, accountability, and results.</p> <p>I also cofounded and ran a multimillion-dollar local business, giving me firsthand knowledge of how a successful private business should be run and the challenges owners face working with City Hall. This makes me unique: I clearly understand both government and business. I will bring that proven, Christian conservative leadership to restore trust, ensure fiscal responsibility, and get Post Falls working for its citizens.</p> | See my response to question #1. I am the most experienced candidate for this position and my education and work career lend themselves to my continued success. I have held many leadership roles, represented the City in meetings with governors, corporate executive officers and business owners. I have presented to many groups and have spoken extensively in local schools, talking with students about municipal government. The city is financially sound, the future is constantly being planned for and we emphasize keeping property taxes under control. I strongly support first responders and will work to keep them properly funded. I listen to my constituents and assist them whenever I can. I am not running because I crave power, control or notoriety. I am running because Post Falls is home and because I care. Being a lifelong resident, I have seen as much, or more change to our community than anyone. I will work to see that these changes don't change the nature of our city. | <p>I'm an engineer and entrepreneur. I've worked for NASA in Antarctica doing satellite communication work, MIT where I built autonomous aircraft systems, and multiple startup companies. I own my own business and wear many hats during the day. Most of my work time is spent with American manufacturing businesses, helping them streamline operations and building systems with custom software to encode their unique processes. I'm a big fan of Trump's tariffs and a firm believer in reshoring American manufacturing to Make America Great Again.</p> <p>I'm the only candidate with this kind of industry experience, which I believe is sorely needed for tackling our current problems and ensuring we maintain our quality of life for our children and grandchildren.</p> |